

## Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening



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### CEPPS/IFES Quarterly Report: April 1 – June 30, 2015

#### IRAQ: Elections Support Project

USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 267-11-00001, under the Leader  
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## I. SUMMARY

The Elections Support Project (ESP) had several notable accomplishments this reporting period despite the tense security situation. Throughout the reporting period, IFES provided the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) with analytical information as well as technical expertise in organizational capacity building (specifically in building strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation processes), information technology/information and communications technology (IT/ICT), and the planning process for introducing e-voting in Iraq. A series of important workshops took place (see Table 1) with a total of 746 participants. Operational assistance continued smoothly, and significant strides were made in IHEC's strategic planning monitoring and evaluation process.

Finally, the opening of the IHEC Electoral Education Institute (EEI) paved the way for offering educational and training materials and specific training programs to different electoral stakeholders. IFES provided the Institute with trainings and assistance in defining the overall goals, objectives, strategy, partnership, technology needs, activities and programs of the Institute. During the workshop conducted by IFES for the Institute management and staff, IFES and Institute staff defined EEI's vision and mission, and developed a roadmap for its future success.

Security issues and budgetary constraints, which stem from issues pertaining to the national budget process, remain major factors impacting the building of a long-term, sustainable infrastructure at IHEC. However, based on past experience, IFES believes that IHEC remains committed to its long-term mission as a transparent institution implementing elections in Iraq.

In addition, IFES started preparations for project closeout; the final day of the project is September 30, 2015. On June 30, IFES submitted the closeout plan and disposition plan to USAID.

IFES' Chief of Party (CoP) officially notified the IHEC Board of Commissioners (BoC) about the project closeout and informed them that in the remaining project timeframe, IFES will continue programmatic activities which will culminate with a closeout conference in September. While the IFES Advisors will continue on the job and in-house trainings, such as trainings on software and database development for the IHEC Results Tabulation Team, trainings on the IHEC's strategic planning Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process, and trainings for the Electoral Education Institute, IFES will have limited possibilities of implementing additional external workshops and training events except already agreed upon ones.

On June 1, the IHEC Chairman discussed with the U.S. Embassy and USAID officials the sustainability of the international assistance to the IHEC in light of the ESP closeout. During the meeting the Chairman stressed the vital and important role of IFES during the previous years in building the capacity of the IHEC staff, emphasizing that the IHEC still needs international support.

Finally, in the reporting period, IFES Chief of Party (CoP) and Deputy CoP conducted a number of meetings with representatives of USAID, including Director of the Office of Iraq and Arabian Peninsula Affairs, USAID Iraq Director of Programs, and US Embassy Political Section staff to provide briefings on the current project activities and plans for the remaining project lifetime.

**Table 1: IFES-facilitated Trainings and Workshops, April 1 – June 30, 2015**

Date	Location	Title	Total Participants	# of Female Participants	NO/GEO* Participant Distribution
April – June on-going	Baghdad	Training on Software and Database Development for the Results Tabulation Team (32 training days)	14	1	14/0
April – June on-going	Baghdad	Training on the IHEC's Strategic Planning Monitoring and Evaluation process and Baseline System Analysis (26 Sessions)	551	85	551/0

March 29 – April 8	Erbil	BRIDGE Train the Facilitator (TtF) Workshop	32	3	20/12
April 7 – 9	Baghdad	ManageEngine ServiceDesk system Training	4	0	4/0
April 16	Baghdad	Electoral Educational Institute Organizational Structure Workshop	10	2	10/0
May 10-14	Erbil	BRIDGE Electoral Contestants and Electoral Dispute Resolution Workshop (first session)	29	4	15/14
May 10	Baghdad	Electoral Educational Institute Organizational Structure Workshop	8	2	8/0
May 16 - 20	Erbil	BRIDGE Electoral Contestants and Electoral Dispute Resolution Workshop (second session)	30	5	13/17
June 15	Baghdad	Electoral Educational Institute Organizational Structure Workshop	8	2	8/0
June 14-18	Erbil	BRIDGE Election Technology and Voters' Registration (first session)	31	4	9/22
June 20-24	Erbil	BRIDGE Election Technology and Voters' Registration (second session)	29	1	12/17
<b>Total workshop participants</b>			<b>746</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>664/82</b>

- *National Office (NO); Governorate Electoral Office (GEO)*

## II. POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL CONTEXT

### *Security*

During this reporting period, Iraq continued to experience an escalated level of violence and conflict as Islamic State (IS) forces increasingly targeted the Government of Iraq (GoI), which, with international support, has attempted to counter IS advancement. Throughout the reporting period, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) supported by local Sunni tribes, Shia militia (whose involvement has been controversial), Kurdish Peshmerga forces and international coalition forces, fought the IS in all areas controlled by the insurgents.

At the end of March, the ISF liberated Tikrit. It sparked significant debate on forthcoming plans for military operations to free Mosul and Anbar, with the GoI, militia groups, and US military command offering different viewpoints. On April 6, Prime Minister (PM) Haider al-Abadi visited Erbil and discussed with the Iraq Kurdistan Region (IKR) Government and the Kurdish President Massoud Barzani the security operation for Mosul. He indicated that the GoI expected the support of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, along with the ISF in the operation to retake Mosul. Meanwhile, al-Abadi's decision to send military equipment and arm the Anbar tribes also showed further efforts to cut off the IS from the west and liberate IS-held cities between Fallujah

and Hit.

On April 7, the ISF began operations to recapture Anbar province. The PM stated that the ISF will have complete ownership over the operation and that support from local tribal fighters will be critical to recapturing and holding territory from the IS. Iranian-backed Shi'a militias, specifically Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Nujaba Movement, and Badr Organization, stated that they are awaiting an invitation by the PM to participate, provided that air support from the US-led coalition is not involved.

In the reporting period, the IS conducted a series of attacks in Iraq that showed its continued capacity to design sophisticated military operations. The IS aims to remain in Iraq by diverting the ISF and Shi'a militias from their planned counteroffensive and dividing those forces up among multiple areas of Iraq such that they no longer can set the terms of battle. The ISF is likely off its ambitious campaign plan, such that it will probably not attempt to clear Mosul this summer. The IS main attack on Ramadi on May 15 followed other tactical offensives that were likely planned preparatory phases for the assault in Anbar rather than isolated attacks.

First, the IS launched attacks on the Baiji Oil Refinery in northern Iraq, diverting ISF attention from Anbar. Second, IS elements from eastern Iraq broke free from a prison in Diyala Province northeast of Baghdad, likely drawing further attention away from Anbar. Third, the IS conducted attacks against pilgrims en route to the Shi'a shrine in Kadhimiya in Baghdad, and possibly propagated the rumors that provoked Shi'a attacks on a Sunni neighborhood in Baghdad.

As a result, the ISF reinforced its concentration on Shi'a shrines during a Shi'a religious holiday. The IS launched its May 15 attack on Ramadi after thus causing the ISF and Shi'a militias to splay themselves in different geographical areas. The IS further set conditions for success in Anbar by attacking north of Baghdad and also Jubba village near al-Asad airbase during the assault on Ramadi to engage the ISF and militia forces there. On May 17, the IS took full control of Ramadi – the Anbar province capital city dominated by Sunni Muslims - in the biggest defeat for the GoI since last summer.

The IS has also launched major attacks against the ISF in the Thar Thar region, north of Fallujah and southwest of Samarra, in an effort to maintain freedom of maneuver and protect Ramadi's northern flank. Further, on May 21 the town of Husaibah, in Anbar province, which was an ISF staging point for a counter-attack to retake Ramadi, has been taken by the IS. The loss of Husaibah does not represent a fundamental change as yet however; it places the Airbase at Hannibayah under a threat of attack.

On June 2, the IS closed the Warrar Dam, north of Ramadi, threatening water supplies to Khalidiya and Habaniya, east of Ramadi, where the ISF and Popular Mobilization Unit (PMU)

forces have staged counter-offensives since the fall of Ramadi. The IS has repeatedly attempted to control dams in Iraq, in some cases reducing the flow of water to areas under government control or flooding swathes of land to impede military operations.

The U.S. policy in Iraq to train and equip the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) appears to be struggling. Secretary of Defense testified before the House Armed Services Committee that the U.S. training mission for the ISF had only trained 9,000 new recruits out of an expected 24,000. Nonetheless, the U.S. Department of Defense authorized the mobilization of 450 additional U.S. trainers to Taqadum Airbase southeast of Ramadi to bolster the train-and-equip program in the vulnerable Anbar province.

The coordination of recent military operations has given rise to further conflicts between the central Iraqi government, Shi'a militia groups, Sunni tribes, and the US government leading the coalition forces via US Central Command (CENTCOM). The collapse of the ISF last summer has resulted in the considerable loss of available manpower and substantial military equipment (a reported 2,300 HUMVEEs were taken in Mosul), which subsequently increased reliance on non-regular armed forces from Shi'a militia groups and Sunni tribal fighters. While Iranian-backed militia forces have been willing to engage in the fighting against IS in Sunni-dominated areas, they are likely to leverage their involvement in military intervention without certain concessions made over the role of US support in operations. Increased pressure on the Iraqi government from ISF losses on the ground, such as those experienced in Baiji and Fallujah, would likely allow for proxy groups including the Badr Organization, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) and Kata'ib Hezbollah (KAH) to exert greater influence over security control and leadership in operations.

### ***Political Situation***

The security situation dominated Iraq politics in the reporting period, causing disputes over the involvement of Shi'a militia forces within and outside of the PMU. The security situation in Anbar province, particularly in Ramadi, prompted the PM's authorization of the PMU forces led by the Badr Organization to enter the fighting and assist the ISF and tribal fighters, a move he previously resisted for fear of provoking a sectarian backlash.

PM Al-Abadi continued his efforts to promote inclusiveness. President Obama praised Abbadi in the course of their bilateral meeting at the White House on April 14, 2015, saying: "And in a significant change from some past practices, I think both Sunni leaders and Kurdish leaders feel that they are heard in the halls of power, that they are participating in governance in Baghdad...Prime Minister Al-Abadi has kept true to his commitments to reach out to them and to

respond to their concerns and to make sure that power is not solely concentrated within Baghdad....”<sup>1</sup>.

However, abuses committed by Shi’a militias, as well as the appointment of Badr Organization figure Mohammad al-Ghabban as Minister of Interior, appear to be slowing any broad Sunni shift toward the government and away from supporting the IS.

The decision in late March 2015 to move forward with an attempt to take back the city of Tikrit with Shi’a militia and Iranian advisory help, rather than the assistance of the U.S.-led coalition, caused many experts to assess that Al-Abadi remains dependent politically and militarily on the Shi’a militias. Al-Abadi addressed this perception in an interview with German newspaper Der Spiegel on April 3 by indicating that “the militias are very powerful because they are ideologically motivated. Honestly, it would be a challenge to deal with this.”<sup>2</sup>

Al-Abadi also faced challenges from within his governing coalition. Some observers report that former PM Maliki continues to seek influence by holding meetings with the State of Law parliamentary bloc, by working with hardline Shi’a figures to undermine the current PM and by cultivating an image of personal affinity for and control over PMU forces.

Al-Abadi’s attempts to address Sunni demands have also caused agitation among the Shi’a. Activists in Basra province, through which the majority of Iraq’s oil is exported, attempted to revive a 2008 effort to convert the province into an autonomous region similar to the IKR. Those supporting forming a region asserted that the province does not receive a fair share of national revenues. On April 17, the IHEC received a petition signed by approximately 44,000 residents of Basra province for organizing a referendum to form a Basra Region.

According to the law No 13 of 2008 on Formation of Regions, a 2% threshold of eligible voters from Basra province (included in the voter register) or the equivalent of 34,000 signatures are required to start a referendum process. On April 26, the IHEC Board of Commissioners (BoC) rejected the Basra referendum request due to lack of the required 2% threshold. The verification of names revealed that only 21,505 names were included in the voter register, which represents 1.2% of the total number of Basra voters – 1,741,599.

Several legislative bills remained held up in the Council of Representatives (CoR) as the GoI tried to reach consensus on a number of important laws, such as the National Guard formation.

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<sup>1</sup> White House. “President Obama Holds a Media Availability with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi. April 14, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Susanne Koelbl, “Interview with Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Abadi: ‘The Liberation of Tikrit Is Very Encouraging’” Spiegel (Hamburg), April 3, 2015.

Although the draft National Guard Law advanced to a second reading by the CoR by the end of reporting period the law has not been approved. The National Guard force command and composition are among the contentious issues that generated much discussion with a particular point of concern regarding the degree of command and control over Iranian-backed Shi'a militias. The law was sent to the CoR governorate offices for discussion with local authorities civil society organization to obtain their feedback. In mid-June, the Council of Ministers (CoM) approved a draft General Amnesty Law meant to enable the release of large numbers of detained Iraqi Sunnis and forwarded the draft to the CoR. Although the law will likely face resistance in the CoR, similar to the pushback against the National Guard Law, its passage by the CoM indicates that the government of PM al-Abadi is prioritizing a drive for national reconciliation.

Meanwhile, as the tenure of IKR President Massoud Barzani is coming to an end, the question of transfer of power has divided Kurdish political factions and threatens to destabilize the region. Barzani has been president for 10 years. When his term was about to end in June 2013, his Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and then-ally Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) - led by former Iraqi President Jalal Talabani - agreed to extend his term via a parliamentary motion for two years. The legal provisions introduced in June 2013 to extend Barzani's term explicitly state that the president's tenure will not be prolonged for more than two years. This two-year period will end on August 19, 2015. Political discussions have been taking place for some time about whether or not to renew his mandate. The spokesperson of the KDP said the current situation in Iraqi Kurdistan requires President Barzani to stay in office. Meanwhile, many political parties believe that there should be another election for the president's office.

According to the IKR 2005 Presidency Law, if the president's seat becomes vacant, then the Speaker of Parliament should take over the president's duties and a new president should be elected within 60 days. As parties debate the controversial question, the IKR Parliament has formed a committee to revise a draft constitution for the region that was passed in 2009. A major source of contention in the draft is the extent of the president's power versus parliament or PM.

The recently established IKR Independent High Elections and Referendums Commission (IHERC) announced at the end of May that it needs a preparation period of ten months and \$60 million to conduct a constitutional referendum. The IHERC Chairman also informed that no budget has been allocated so far to the Commission that would be necessary for the operations of the Commission.

In April, the IHEC BoC travelled to Erbil and conducted a number of meetings with the Speaker of the IKR Parliament to discuss the issues related to establishing of the IHERC including cooperation and division of powers. Subsequently, on June 3, the IHEC BoC decided to establish a committee to discuss the challenges and obstacles related to establishment of the IHERC.

On June 13, President Masoud Barzani called on all related government agencies and organizations to prepare for IKR presidential elections on August 20, 2015. On June 14, the IKR Independent High Elections and Referendums Commission (IHERC) announced that the commission needs 180 days for preparations for such elections. However, in exceptional cases, the elections can be organized within 90 days. The IHEC announced that they did not receive any official request to assist the IHERC in conducting the IKR presidential elections.

On June 17, the IKR Parliament hosted the IHEC Chairman and members of the IHERC who informed Parliament that the commission is unable to conduct the presidential elections on August 20, 2015, as called by President Barzani. The Commission's Chairman listed the obstacles they face, including no allocated budget, no governorate offices, and lack of equipment and staff. The Parliament identified the regional government as the source for these issues and suggested to establish a committee to help the commission complete their preparations.

On June 22, an IHEC BoC delegation met with the chairman of the IHERC to discuss the cooperation between the IHEC and IHERC and technical support that the IHEC can provide to the IHERC to build its capacity.

On June 30, the IHEC BoC approved the estimated budget for the 2017 Governorate Council Elections. The estimated budget is IQD 416,034,000,000. IHEC will address the PM's office regarding the allocation of that budget.

Finally, in the reporting period, the humanitarian crisis in Iraq has deepened with approximately eight million Iraqis in need of urgent humanitarian aid, including about three million internally displaced persons (IDPs), according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The humanitarian organizations are preparing to launch an appeal to raise \$500 million, in order to meet the relief needs in Iraq. According to the UNICEF representative in Iraq "the humanitarian situation in Iraq is close to a disaster."

### **III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

#### **Objective 1: IHEC's Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Capacity is Strengthened**

Building on the experience IHEC gained during the drafting of the strategic plan, and following adoption and publication of the plan, IFES continued assisting IHEC in developing and building monitoring and evaluation processes that will allow for the continual review and assessment of the strategic plan.

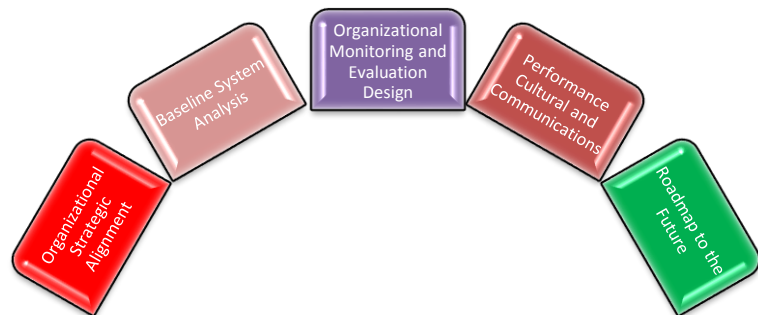
### ***Activity 1.3: Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plans***

Sustainable institutional capacity to conduct strategic and operational planning is built upon the bedrock of solid monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools. Review and evaluation is an ongoing process that is necessary to encourage continuous improvement, and provide evidence of the impact of IHEC's activities and an informed basis for decision-making and future planning.

IFES developed the basic concept of country-led M&E and practical on-the-job training for M&E tool use. In early April, IFES prepared and submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) a concept paper on the M&E workshops to be conducted. Participants included members of the M&E Committee, made up of staff from the IHEC Capacity Building Department (CBD). The CBD, through their discussions with the CEO, identified seven staff members to work with IFES. The M&E Committee identified the individuals to be involved in the workshops broken out into six separate groups ranging from 19 to 32 participants. All workshops for the National Office (NO) staff were conducted at the IHEC Data Entry Center (DEC).

IFES is assisting the IHEC M&E Committee in deploying custom indicators for the IHEC strategic plan, as well as development of systems and procedures for operationalizing the M&E plans. IFES developed and provided IHEC with the "Foundational Building Blocks for the IHEC Monitoring and Evaluation Process" document. This methodology allows for the building and transfer of knowledge and processes during the M&E and strategic planning process, namely the tracking of progress of the strategic plan's implementation.

IFES continues to work with IHEC to further cascade the plan development down to the department and section levels within the IHEC. The following model and methodology was approved by the IHEC as the baseline processes to be followed in the development and training of the IHEC staff towards the M&E goal.



**Figure 1: Steps in the M&E Process**

With the assistance of the M&E Committee, in the reporting period, IFES completed the training and collection of the data from the first 4 phases (see below). The M&E Committee is currently working with IFES (through mentoring, coaching, training and monitoring) to analyze the data and develop the findings and recommendations for each phase as well as an M&E dashboard for the second phase.

**Phase 1:** The Organizational Strategic Alignment (OSA) is an invaluable tool to help the leadership of the organization as well as the IHEC staff to engage in an evaluation process and ensures alignment of functions that are areas of possible efficiency improvement and have linkage to the strategic plan and mission execution.

**Phase 2:** The Baseline System Assessment (BSA) is an invaluable tool to help the organization engage in an unbiased evaluation of processes and functions and define the current level of success as well as the future state and identify areas of possible efficiency improvement and linkage to the strategic plan, goals and mission execution. This phase will also develop the initial dashboard for monitoring current and future progress.

**Phase 3:** The Organizational Monitoring and Evaluation Design (OMED) is a process that develops an organizational view into and around the actions and interactions of the IHEC strategic goals and activities and allows the organization to make informed future decisions. This includes internal and external connections, pressures and influencers. This process may also show potential gaps or weaknesses within the organizational environment.

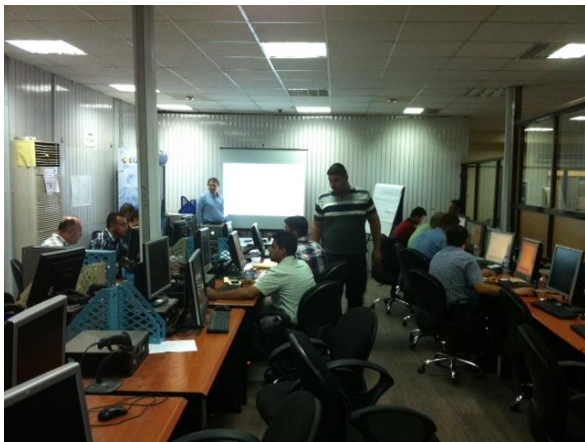
**Phase 4:** The Performance Cultural and Communications (PCC) is a proven process that outlines and develops a guide for an organization to take the appropriate actions to ensure organizational interactions are successful during the mission execution process and the informed organizational decisions are adopted and integrated effectively and efficiently.

So far, IFES conducted 26 training session for a total of 551 IHEC staff members including 85 women. IFES will continue practical on-the-job training for M&E tool use throughout August 2015.

### **Objective 2: IHEC's Internal Management Processes and Systems are Strengthened**

IFES continued to support IHEC in implementing continuous voter registration (CVR) and improving IT/database systems.

Following the IHEC BoC decision No. 4, issued on March 10, 2015, on forming the IHEC Results Tabulation Team (RTT), IFES prepared a training concept for 13 identified IHEC staff members in the field of software and database development. The purpose of the training is bringing the existing IHEC developers up to the modern standards of software and database development and familiarizing them with the existing version of the results tabulation software. The trainings also aim at increasing the number of IHEC developers capable of working on the results tabulation software, ensuring the ability of



the IHEC to efficiently manage the results tabulation for future electoral events.

On April 1, IFES Database Development Advisor (DDA) together with IFES IT Technical Program Associate (IT-TPA) held a meeting with the IHEC Head of Data Entry Unit of the Voter Record Section to discuss the upcoming trainings for the RTT, and present a draft timeline of the trainings. The DDA and IHEC staff prepared the venue for training inside the Data Entry Center (DEC) and installed software on the training computers. Consequently, the timeline was presented to and approved by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO).

The training started on April 13 and continued throughout the reporting period with a total of 32 training days. Based on the CEO decision, the original number of 13 trainees was increased to 14

**Figure 2: Members of the RTT during training session at the IHEC**

with the addition of a female employee from the Data Management Section (DMS).

On May 24, following the request of the Manager responsible for the RTT, IFES' DDA, together with the IT-TPA, conducted the knowledge test on the training module 1 - database development. The test was divided into the two one-hour written and practical sessions; 13 out of 14 RTT staff members participated in the test. The written test consisted of 25 questions, weighted 75% of the total score. The practical test consisted of 5 questions, weighted 25% of the total score. The scores for the top three participants were 92%, 90%, and 89%.

On June 15, IFES conducted the training knowledge test on the second module – web development. Similar to the previous test, it was divided into two sessions, one-hour theory and two-hour practical tests and 11 out of 14 RTT staff members participated in the test. The test for the absent staff members will be conducted in July.

The written test consisted of 25 questions, weighted 75% of the total score. The practical test consisted of 5 questions, weighted 25% of the total score. The scores for the top three participants were 100%, 95% and 95%.

Starting on July 7, IFES will continue the RTT trainings on module 3 – Microsoft.NET development.

### ***Activity 2.2: Advise IHEC on the Implementation of Continuous Voter Registration Processes and Decentralized Data Entry for Voter Registration***

As part of its preparation to start continuous voter registration in the IKR and Kirkuk province, the IHEC conducted cascade training for continuous voter registration staff in the IKR, Kirkuk, and Diyala in Erbil on April 20 – 29. The first level targeted 46 staff followed by a second level involving 539 staff members.

At the beginning of May, the IHEC started the continuous voter registration in the IKR and Kirkuk province by opening 18 voter registration centers (VRCs) in the area controlled by the GoI and is planning to start the registration in Diyala, if the security situation improves. The IHEC started the registration in the IKR through mobile teams targeting university students, governmental employees, and security forces. On June 3, the BoC decided to approve a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the IKR security ministries to facilitate conducting of the CVR for their staff.

Lack of funding affected the IHEC plan for continuous voter registration, as no new employees joined the IHEC. The central media plan was not implemented as planned due to the financial issues, and some of the Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) started their own media plans by visiting governmental institutions and universities to encourage their staff and students to register. In mid-May, the IHEC announced that the 2015 budget allocation for the IHEC does not allow completing the biometric registration by the 2017 CoR elections.

The IHEC has four committees in place looking at various aspects of continuous voter registration, all lead by the Head of Voter Registration. These are collaborating with the vendor (INDRA) on the following aspects: training of IHEC staff, devices maintenance and electronic data transfer from GEOs. The last committee is looking at warehousing facilities with maintenance potential inside the International Zone (IZ).

By the end of June 2015, approximately 1,933,185 people have been registered. Of these, 945,756 were women. The percentage of successfully captured and recorded fingerprints is 91%.

The IHEC is also distributing electronic cards which were not collected during the original distribution period in early 2014. Approximately 18,490 have been distributed so far.

### ***Activity 2.3: Implementation of a Comprehensive Electoral Training Curriculum Based on the BRIDGE Curriculum***

In September 2011, IFES and IHEC launched a comprehensive training program to help IHEC staff gain a deeper understanding of the electoral process and the international standards for genuine and credible elections. The program – Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections (BRIDGE) – consists of introductory training workshops, custom-tailored workshops, technical modules workshops, and modules specifically designed to target stakeholders.

In the reporting period, IFES continued to provide BRIDGE trainings in order to bring IHEC staff up to the desired level, at which point they will be competent to train their colleagues on elections-related issues, thereby building a sustainable internal training system. These BRIDGE trainings were geared towards an internal audience, i.e. IHEC staff from the NO and GEOs.

Between March 29 – April 8, IFES conducted the BRIDGE Train the Facilitator (TtF) workshop targeting staff members from the NO and GEOs. The aim of the training was to expand the pool of IHEC BRIDGE semi-accredited facilitators. The IHEC will depend on those facilitators to disseminate the knowledge on electoral systems and processes, and to educate the IHEC staff and stakeholder in the future. The training took place in Erbil with 26 staff members (including two females). Fourteen of the participants came from the IHEC NO and twelve from the GEOs. It was facilitated by the IFES BRIDGE accrediting facilitator, IFES Project Manager, and six IHEC trainers (including one female).

The participants began the ten-day training with sessions on the background of BRIDGE, the teaching methodology behind it and the Learning Outcomes of the TtF Program. Participants then applied the new materials through a variety of activities, such as role play, group work, and case study.

Participants were asked to work in pairs to present and facilitate BRIDGE activities assigned to them by the facilitators. Participants were required to prepare all necessary resources for the presentation such as handouts and scenarios for the role-play. On the last day of the course, participants developed implementation frameworks for BRIDGE in their context.



**Figure 3: Participants of the TtF Training**

The participants were evaluated against a set of key learning outcomes necessary to achieve to successfully complete the BRIDGE TtF workshop. All 26 participants passed the workshop and received their Semi-Accreditation certificates. Based on the assessment, the participants were assigned to three different groups as potential future fully accredited BRIDGE trainers. Group A – participants who can be immediately accredited (0 participants), Group B+ – participants who require minor additional development through experience and training (8 participants), Group B- participants who require long term additional development (10 participants); and Group C - participants who require significant additional development (8 participants).

The TtF final report was presented to the BoC on April 20, followed by a letter strongly recommending involving the Semi-Accredited Facilitators from Group B+ in the upcoming BRIDGE trainings, considering the limited number of BRIDGE trainings, to complete their accreditation as they require minor additional development.

Following the TtF, IFES worked with the CBD, the IHEC Electoral Educational Institute (EEI) and IHEC's BRIDGE facilitators to select and develop training materials for four different BRIDGE modules customized for the Iraqi electoral environment on: Electoral Contestants and Electoral Dispute Resolution; and Election Technology and Voters' Registration.

On May 4 – 9, the team consisting of IFES BRIDGE Lead Facilitator, IFES Electoral Legal Advisor (ELA), and IHEC BRIDGE facilitators worked in Erbil on the materials and presentations for the BRIDGE Electoral Contestants and Electoral Dispute Resolution modules.



**Figure 4 Participants of the BRIDGE Electoral Contestants and Electoral Dispute Resolution training on May 10-14, 2015**

On May 10-14, IFES conducted the first session of the BRIDGE Electoral Contestants and Electoral Dispute Resolution modules in Erbil with participation of 25 staff members (including 4 women) from the IHEC NO and GEOs. The workshop was facilitated by the IFES BRIDGE accrediting facilitator, IFES Election Legal Advisor (ELA), and four IHEC trainers (including one female).

On May 16 - 20, IFES conducted the second session of the BRIDGE Electoral Contestants and Electoral Dispute Resolution training modules in Erbil with participation of 26 staff members (including 4 women) from the IHEC NO and GEOs. The workshop was facilitated by the IFES BRIDGE accrediting facilitator and four IHEC trainers (one female), including the IHEC Chairman.

The following topics were covered in order to ensure achieving the workshops objectives: international standards and its sources; political parties and the electoral cycle; registration of political parties and candidates; communicating with political parties; parties' funding; campaign expenditure; electoral justice; electoral crimes; electoral fraud (case studies); role of courts in electoral dispute resolution.

As a result of both sessions, four IHEC trainers received their full accreditation and became BRIDGE workshop facilitators.



**Figure 5 IHEC Chairman awarding BRIDGE certificates during the May 16-20, 2015 BRIDGE Electoral Contestants and Electoral Dispute Resolution training**

On June 8-12, a team consisting of IFES Accrediting Facilitator, IFES' Project Manager, IFES' Elections Technology Specialist (ETS), and IFES' Elections Technology – Technical Program Associate (ET-TPA), along with six IHEC BRIDGE facilitators worked in Erbil on the materials and presentations for the BRIDGE Election Technology and Voters' Registration modules scheduled for June 14-18 and June 20-24.

On June 14-18, IFES conducted the first session of the BRIDGE Election Technology and Voters' Registration module in Erbil with participation of 25 staff members (including four women) from the IHEC National Office (NO) and Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs). The workshop was facilitated by the IFES BRIDGE accrediting facilitator, IFES Elections Technology Specialist (ET), Elections Technology – Technical Program Associate (ET-TPA), and six IHEC trainers (including one female).

On June 20-24, the second session of the Election Technology and Voters' Registration module took place in Erbil with participation of 25 staff members (including 1 woman) from the IHEC NO and GEOs. The workshop was facilitated by the IFES BRIDGE accrediting facilitator, the IFES Elections Technology – Technical Program Associate (ET-TPA), and four IHEC trainers (including one female).

The following topics were covered in order to ensure achieving the workshops objectives: basic principles and criteria for voter registration; types of voter registration; secondary benefits of the voter register; biometric registration in Iraq, Zambia; introduction to the concept of technology; standards of electronic voting; controlled and non-controlled voting; the use of technology in training; the role of technology in voter education; the use of technology in boundary delimitation; examples for electronic registration and voting; and scanning systems. Furthermore, during this BRIDGE activity, IFES stressed the importance of consolidating IT management. In the absence of a long term, coherent management strategy, technology fragments (disparate systems, based on different technologies of from different vendors) are implemented, leading to a host of problems. Long term planning from an ICT perspective also becomes difficult. Consolidating skills under a single management IT infrastructure leads to the advantages of: better trained personnel; single point of contact; consolidation of physical (hardware) resources; and consolidation of human resources.

As a result of both sessions, four IHEC trainers received their full accreditation and became BRIDGE workshop facilitators, an indication of sustainability as they will be able to train their peers after the project ends.

#### ***Activity 2.4: Support to IHEC in introducing technology in elections***

IHEC has started a process of introducing technology in the electoral process. The acquisition of its automated voter registration (AVR) system at the end of 2013 and the announcement of the

intention to implement electronic voting (e-voting) by 2018 are significant steps towards automation of the Iraqi elections. IFES plays an important role in the long-term viability of this process, both from a strategic and an advisory point of view.

During the reporting period IFES continued working on the capacity building of the IHEC IT staff and providing technical assistance to the IHEC IT Department. Additionally, IFES continued to support IHEC IT staff in fixing and resolving issues with the servers, network and systems.

On April 7 – 9, IFES IT-Technical Program Associate (IT-TPA) conducted the second training on the ManageEngine ServiceDesk system at the IHEC Data Entry Center (DEC) for four IT staff members. The software will help the IT Section in incident management (trouble ticketing), assets tracking and purchasing, contract management, and self-service portal. The first two days of on-the-job training focused on theoretical aspects while the last two days provided knowledge on the practical implementation.

#### ***Activity 2.4.1: Automated Voter Registration (AVR)***

IFES advisors have been working on data privacy issues. In Iraq, IHEC is acting on behalf of the federal government; the collected data will not remain within IHEC, and will in all likelihood be made available to other government institutions. This does not violate any legal principles, provided claims of data privacy are not made. However, there are no regulations protecting citizens from misuse of data after it is collected. With the advent of biometric voter registration, this is becoming a critical issue. According to international standards, the first step in the process for ensuring data privacy is for the electoral management body to introduce regulations guiding the use of collected data, which should gradually become absorbed into law.

Data privacy covers the specifications defining the ways collected data can be used, and the legal process governing the collection of data. It protects the rights of the citizens from whom the data was collected, ensuring the data is used only for the purpose for which it was collected. It provides a legal foundation to prevent institutions from distributing personal data without proper controls.

Therefore, IFES recruited a data privacy expert to draft a report with recommendations to the IHEC, and ultimately to the Council of Ministers (CoM), regarding the use of collected voter registration biometric data. The report will look at international guidelines on the subject, and will extract some of the best practices, adapting them to the Iraq situation.

The IFES Data Privacy consultant finalized the report on “Protection of personal information election data” mid-June and IFES prepared a summary of the report which was presented to the IHEC in the last week of June.

### ***Activity 2.4.2: Electronic Voting***

During the second half of 2013, IHEC invested heavily in technology to reduce fraud and increase accuracy and reliability in the electoral process. It envisions that e-voting will be the next step in this automation process.

IFES continued to play a role in this process. There are several aspects where guidance is needed, and more will become evident as the project matures. IFES drafted a paper for the IHEC on “Paper Trails” (paper verification for e-voting). The importance and pitfalls of paper verification in e-voting needs to be highlighted, as it is not the panacea indicated by some vendors. In the case of e-voting, public informational campaigns are even more important than with voter registration, as trust in the process needs to be established before the solution is accepted.

In voting systems which rely on the device for tallying and storage of the result (i.e. DRE systems), the paper trail (Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail, or VVPAT) is one of the most commonly accepted security mechanisms for electronic voting today. Inherent to this model is the production of a paper record of the vote, which the voter verifies. This record can be used in a recount at a later stage.

There are many advantages to using this technique. However, a number of experts have raised potential problems that may arise if VVPAT is not correctly implemented. Therefore, IFES compiled a list of recommendations from these sources for the IHEC’ consideration:

- a) The paper trail must be stored in a random way so as to preclude any possibility of determining the order in which the vote was cast. This basically excludes the use of reel to reel spools, or the printing of a timestamp on the printed ballot.
- b) Procedures must be in place to encourage the voter to verify that the printed selection matches his vote.
- c) There should be a standard procedure for verifying the DRE electronic count against the paper trail, and procedures for handling discrepancies.
- d) The paper vote should take precedence over the electronic count in the event of a dispute.
- e) Ballots should contain no information that is not human readable (such as barcodes)
- f) The vendor must have the source code certified – especially the critical parts of the system (e.g. recording and printing)
- g) There should be a properly administered parallel testing on election-day.

The IFES Elections Technology Specialist (ET) together with the Elections Technology - Technical Program Associate (ET-TPA) met with the Commissioner - Head of Electronic Voting Committee on April 27 to discuss the work of the Committee and to present the “Paper Trails” document prepared by IFES. The Committee is currently collecting ideas and suggestions on usage of the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology which will help the IHEC to

speed up the result announcement process. It has been agreed that IFES will be a member of the Committee and attend its meetings.

Also, in the reporting period, IFES developed and submitted to the IHEC the “Trust and the EMB” document, which discusses issues of trust in the light of the use of technology in elections. As the IHEC moves away from traditional paper-based elections to a technology-based environment, many of the procedures that were once easily verified by layman are now being replaced by technologies that require specialists to understand them. Trust is becoming more important – trust that the right technologies have been supplied, trust that the answers supplied are correct and trust in the impartiality and the independence of the IHEC. By implementing these processes, IHEC is asking the voters to trust it with the safe custodianship of the electronic data.

In the remaining period of project implementation, IFES will examine requests for additional expert advice from IHEC on an ad-hoc basis.

#### ***Activity 2.6.1: District and Sub-District Elections***

The district and sub-districts elections (DSEs) are required by law to be conducted six months after the governorate councils elections (GCEs). Iraq conducted two GCEs in 2009 and 2013 and has yet to conduct the DSEs. The current councils continued exercising their role and authorities granted by the laws since they were established in 2004.<sup>3</sup>

Following the “District and Sub-District Elections Planning Workshop” conducted by IFES on February 16-17, 2015 with participation of the IHEC NO, GEOs, the CoR, and MoP, and the Central Bureau of Statistics, the IHEC called the CoR to amend the provincial councils district and sub district elections law to enable the IHEC to set a final date for conduct of the elections.

On June 2, IHEC announced that conducting district and sub district elections depends on the Government and the CoR decision regarding timeline, budget, and other technical issues, noting that the Commission is ready to hold elections in about 86-100 districts. However, IHEC excluded the possibility of implementing this election in the current year due to financial and security constraints.

The BoC also assigned a committee within IHEC to prepare a response to the two letters sent by the CoR Regions and Governorates Committee requesting the IHEC to continue all preparations for district and sub district elections and informing that the CoR Speaker

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Law no. 36 of 2008 Article 46 /Third: *In case the elections were postponed, the provincial, districts, and sub-districts councils shall continue to run its own affairs until new councils are elected.*

reviewed recommendations from the “Districts and sub-districts elections planning” workshop and requesting the IHEC to prepare the necessary legal amendments and presented them to the CoR Legal Committee.

***Activity 2.7: Support IHEC in development of an improved legal framework for electoral processes***

IFES continued working with IHEC on providing day-to-day monitoring and training to the Legal Consultation and Complaints Section (LCCS), in addition to the Complaints Units at the GEO level.

On June 4, the IHEC BoC approved recommendations adopted during the BRIDGE workshops on “Electoral contestants and Electoral Disputes Resolutions” conducted in Erbil on May 10-14 and 16-20, 2015. The recommendations included issuance of a preliminary list of candidates in order to expose them to the voters and political entities before final accreditation; introduction of electoral offences detection and tracking processes; revealing electoral crimes; enhancing cooperation with the CoR to adopt the political parties’ law; and printing educational leaflet on the electoral complaints adjudication process. Additionally, it was recommended for the IHEC to maintain close communication and coordination with political entities, media, and NGOs.

IFES worked with the LCCS and the Data Management Section (DMS) on the possible creation of a complaints website and electronic submission of the complaints. IFES held a series of meetings with the IHEC to assist with the elaboration of the concept for such a database. IFES identified the ways to implement the electronic submission of the complaints, identification of the users and technical details related to the hosting, content of the website, and ways to make the existing complaints database to be available to the public through the website. While the electronic submission of the complaints still needs to be approved by BoC, putting the complaints database on the website for public access will greatly contribute to the transparency of the electoral process.

During the reporting period, IFES worked on drafting a proposal to the IHEC to establish an anti-fraud section under the supervision of the BoC, that, within a reasonable period of time, can be prepared and ready prior to any upcoming electoral event. IFES identified in that proposal the importance of establishing the section, the main responsibilities, the structure and the main qualifications of the staff to work in that section. The proposal will be submitted to IHEC in the next quarter.

**Objective 3: IHEC Capacity to Manage External Affairs with Key Electoral Stakeholders is Improved**

The need for IHEC to develop an effective media relations strategy and a strategy for engaging all electoral stakeholders was identified during the design of the ESP and much work has been

done since the inception of the project. To build on these efforts and further assist IHEC in implementing an effective outreach strategy and to solidify IHEC's reputation as an independent, neutral and transparent institution, IFES supported IHEC with the following activities.

### ***Activity 3.1: Implementation of a strategic communications plan***

IFES continued to work with and support IHEC on the development of the communications plan. IFES has supported IHEC in the development of a process to identify, develop and monitor an organizational internal and external communications methodology which is repeatable and sustainable.

Through the continued use of the framework of the communication plan, which was developed by the Communications Committee (CC) in coordination with IFES, the participants continued to develop their input for the plan by identification of current and future activities and stakeholders.

In the reporting period, IFES attended the regular meetings of CC to discuss the recommendations from the CC and information received from the GEOs. The GEOs provided 48 specific communication activities which were rated and ranked by the number of GEOs requesting the same or like type of activity. The CC defined projects and activities for possible future implementation: 1) a training program, to be implemented in conjunction with the IHEC EEI, targeting new journalists and media members in order to introduce them to IHEC's work, regulations, and procedures; and 2) a training program to educate political entities representatives about the IHEC procedures. This, along with another 36 recommendations from the CC which were also rated and ranked, became the basis for the communications plan recommendations and activities.

On June 21, IFES delivered to the CC the communications plan that outlines seven specific initial recommendations as well as discusses the challenges such as the lack of a specific budget for various implementation activities. All activities and recommendations were ordered by cost, time resources needed, human resources needed and benefit measure. The recommendations were also aligned with the results of the 2014 public opinion survey on the electoral process and democracy in Iraq.

### ***Activity 3.2: Capacity building training in the design, implementation and conduct of voter information and educational programs - Conduct of National Surveys***

Through the 2014 nationwide public opinion survey fielded after the CoR elections, IFES collected information related to the implementation of AVR and the media campaign for those elections and also information related to how voter's experience may be improved in the next implementation stages. This information will be used to advise the IHEC on technical and public

outreach activities. The data will also enable IFES and IHEC to identify target groups for public outreach, the types of messages that should be created, and the best vehicles for delivery.

The IFES 2014 survey was conducted in 15 of Iraq's 18 provinces between October 11 and November 8, 2014 by the Independent Institute for Administration and Civil Society Studies (IIACSS).

IFES finalized the survey report at the end of March and on March 31, IFES conducted a presentation for the IHEC BoC on the main findings and excerpts of the survey findings as they relate to public perception and confidence in the IHEC. At the beginning of April, IFES submitted to the IHEC an overview of the IFES "Final Report on Opinions on the Electoral Process and Democracy in Iraq." The BoC issued a decision assigning the Chairman to present the survey findings to the CoR, the PM Office, and to the President's Office. The BoC also assigned the CEO to take required action to publicize the findings and to include key outcomes in the IHEC's publications.

On April 14, IFES conducted a presentation on the public opinion survey for representatives of USAID and the US Embassy in Iraq.

Following the IHEC Board of Commissioners request to publicized survey results, IFES has started preparations for conduct of a one-day conference on the survey. The event was originally scheduled for June 17 with the participation of the representatives of the IHEC, the Council of Representatives, media, and local NGOs (approximately 70 participants) but has been postponed for August 8 and will take place in Baghdad. The conference will present the results of the IFES survey and the key findings and provide the opportunity to discuss areas for improvement in IHEC's performance. It will also provide IHEC with the opportunity to enhance relations with the election external stakeholders and to solidify IHEC's reputation as an independent, neutral and transparent institution.

#### ***Activity 3.4: Support the IHEC Electoral Education Institute***

In January 2014, the BoC approved establishing the EEI which was created as a section under the CEO office with two units: electronic library and electoral research, and with six staff members seconded from the IHEC NO. The successful establishment of the EEI at IHEC is of crucial significance towards the realization of the broader goal of reforming and improving the management and administration of the electoral process in Iraq. The EEI was inaugurated in November 2014.

During this reporting period IFES held a series of workshops to instruct the EEI on the process and procedures of organizational strategy and alignment as well as organizational development principals. These activities support the continued successful growth and development of the EEI

and improvement of the management and administration of the electoral process in Iraq through educational opportunities.



**Figure 6 Organizational Strategy and Alignment Workshop, April 16, 2015**

On April 16, IFES held the second in the series of organizational strategy and alignment workshops at the EEI location in Baghdad Rusafa, for 10 staff members (including two women). The workshop goals were to develop and define specific objectives to implementing training in the areas of electoral education development and define the EEI vision, mission and strategy through the cross cutting areas of people, processes and technology. The workshop met its goals to develop and improve the capabilities of the EEI employees in a way that makes them more effective and efficient with the related instructions and research while aligning the IHEC strategy.

On May 10, IFES held the third in the series of organizational strategy and alignment workshops at the EEI location in Baghdad Rusafa, for 8 staff members (including two women). The specific objective of the workshop was to implement training in the areas of development of the current and future goals and objectives to support the IHEC strategy. The workshop met its goals and the EEI defined the overall goals, objectives, activities and programs of the Institute. During the workshop, the IHEC strategic goals were reviewed and the EEI defined current and future goals and objectives to support the IHEC strategy. Also, objective measures that support IHEC's strategic plan were defined.



**Figure 7 Organizational Strategy and Alignment Workshop, May 10, 2015**

Finally, on June 15, IFES held the fourth and last in the series of organizational strategy and alignment workshops at the EEI location in Baghdad Rusafa, for 8 staff members (including two women). The specific objectives of the workshop were to implement training in the areas of organizational design and alignment of the current and future goals and objectives to the design to support the IHEC strategy. The workshop met its goals and the EEI developed, defined and completed a justification for three future options for organizational structures that support the

current and future goals and objectives. A roadmap for future success of the EEI with identification of possible obstacles to their success was drafted.



**Figure 8 Organizational Strategy and Alignment Workshop, June 15, 2015**

All the workshops met their goals of developing and improving the capabilities of the EEI employees in a way that makes them more effective and efficient with the related instructions and collaborative work well into the future. There was a good mix of participants which perform various functions within the EEI which lead to very good discussions around procedures and processes and development of goals and objectives to support the IHEC strategy.

The workshops were conducted using both participative, practice exercises and lecture training methodologies. This was very well received and effective to connect with the audience of various job responsibilities and knowledge of the subject.

The pre-test results showed that the EEI staff had common knowledge of the Institute vision and mission. Most of the other other questions were answered incorrectly or not at all with about 35% of the pre-test questions answered correctly. The post-test results showed that the EEI staff had a common understanding of the current Institute vision and mission and all answered all the other questions correctly. This shows complete understanding and transfer of knowledge during the workshops activities.

Throughout the reporting period, the EEI was implementing the electoral reporter trainings targeting media outlets' staff. This is part of the EEI strategy to enhance relations with media. Also, the EEI conducted trainings on electoral management and electoral systems targeting GEOs CVR staff.

Finally, on June 8, six national electoral management bodies (EMBs) in the Arab region: Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, and Yemen, launched in Beirut, the "Organization of Arab Electoral Management Bodies - ArabEMBs" - the first such professional organization dedicated to promoting cooperation on all aspects of election management in the region. The new organization will enhance professional development and exchange on elections administration, to ensure integrity and transparency. Representatives from member and other electoral management bodies participated in the launch alongside government officials, Arab and foreign ambassadors to Lebanon and representatives of international organizations providing electoral support and technical assistance, including UN agencies and the League of Arab States. The IHEC CEO was selected as the President of the Arab EMBs Executive Council.

Following the establishment of the ArabEMBs, IFES will work with the CEO and the EEI to define a role of the Institute in activities of the association.

## II. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

**Table 3: IFES-Facilitated Workshops, July-September 2015<sup>4</sup>**

Workshop title	Targeted group (# of participants)	Venue	Duration	Proposed date
Organizational Structure and Alignment Workshop	Electoral Education Institute (10 participants)	Baghdad	1 day Session	July
Monitoring and Evaluation in Strategic Planning Phase 5: Implementation and tools training	National Office staff (70 participants)	Baghdad	Multiple 1 day Sessions	July - August
Database and Software Development Training	National Office staff (14 participants)	Baghdad	4 days per week (ongoing)	July - August
Conference on the IFES 2014 Public Opinion Survey on the Electoral Process and Democracy in Iraq	National Office staff, CoR and NGOs representatives, media (70 participants)	Baghdad	1 day	August
Electoral Support Project Closeout Conference	IHEC National Office staff, USAID, UN (30 participants)	Baghdad	1 day	September

## III. QUARTERLY PROJECT BURN RATE

## IV. CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS UPDATE

This past quarter presented the ESP with major challenges to two of its critical assumptions due to the escalated violence in the country.

The assumption that *a secure environment is key to successful implementation of project activities* came into the forefront of external factors influencing the implementation of the project. During the period, a substantial part of the country's territory still remains under the control of the IS, thus sparking national, regional and global alarm over the security and political

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<sup>4</sup> This chart is indicative of IFES workshops in the next quarter. Dates and content are subject to change pending operational requirements and IHEC approvals.

situation in Iraq. Some advances have been made in the fight against the IS, however the security environment continues to create challenges for the successful implementation of program activities.

Also, the assumption that *IHEC will receive adequate funding from the Government of Iraq to perform its functions* came as an external factor influencing the implementation of the project. Regardless 2015 federal budget approval by the CoR, through the reporting period, the continuous voter registration continued only in 11 governorates with a limited number of polling centers opened. There was no formal media campaign, and the IHEC was reaching the population by word-of-mouth, encouraging potential applicants to register by knocking on doors and approaching local religious, tribal, and civic leaders. The need for a formal, coordinated media campaign is well recognized by the IHEC, and was awaiting a proper budget allocation. Lack of understanding of the process and the motivation behind it is causing some resistance to registration amongst the voting public, according to IHEC.

## **V. CONCLUSIONS**

IFES' accomplishments in Q3 FY15 continued with the successful implementation of the ESP. IFES provided essential support to the IHEC in building strategic planning monitoring and evaluation processes.

In addition, IFES provided assistance in the communication planning processes and building capacity of the IHEC Electoral Education Institute. IFES also played a crucial role in building the capacity of the IHEC Results Tabulation Team and planning for introduction of e-voting in Iraq. IFES' team provided information on suitable mechanisms for e-voting in Iraq.

Finally, a number of successful BRIDGE trainings took place which resulted in 26 IHEC staff members receiving semi-accreditation and four members reaching the accreditation level.

The IHEC management and staff have praised IFES' ability to react quickly to training needs and to implement high quality trainings and workshops especially given IHEC' budgetary limitations.